J. J. Lucas

A Wonderful Prophecy

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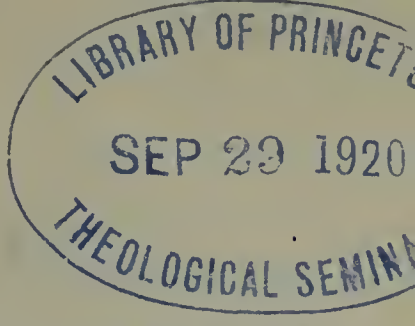

A WONDERFUL PROPHECY

Copies of this paper may be had for free distribution from the writer, Rev. J. J. Lucas, Allahabad.

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A WONDERFUL PROPHECY

WHAT is this wonderful prophecy? It is that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be proclaimed unto all the nations and unto the uttermost part of the earth, and that then the end of the world or age shall come. This prophecy was spoken by the Lord Jesus to His disciples a few days before His death on the Cross. It was spoken in answer to their question—'When shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?' Matthew 24 : 3. He tells them the things that will take place before His coming. The temple at Jerusalem will be utterly destroyed : 'there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down : ' there will arise false Christs and false prophets who shall deceive many: there will be wars and rumours of wars; nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom ; there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places ; iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold. He warns His disciples that they are not to be deceived as though these things were the signs of His coming and of the end of the world ; and then He tells them the sign by which they are to know that the end is near. What is that sign? It is the world-wide proclamation of His Gospel. These are the words of the prophecy. 'This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come.' Matthew 24 : 14. 'The Gospel must first be published among all nations.' Mark 13 : 10. Just before His separation from His disciples and ascension to Heaven, He told them that 'repentance and remission of

sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.' Luke 23 : 47. 'Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up ; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel ; who also said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.' Acts 1 : 9–11.

The prophecy is not that all men will believe the Gospel and become His disciples before His coming again, but that it shall be 'preached in all the world for a witness', and that, whether men receive or reject their testimony, His disciples shall be witnesses unto Him 'unto the uttermost part of the earth.'

Consider for a moment that this prophecy was spoken, not in figurative language capable of many meanings, but in clear simple words understood and acted on by the disciples ; consider that when spoken nearly 1900 years ago, it seemed impossible of fulfilment ; first, because the disciples of Jesus were Galilean Jews, men of limited education and narrow vision, with strong prejudices against having any dealings with the people of other nations ; second, because the carrying of the Gospel to the uttermost part of the earth required the martyr spirit, the spirit that leads men and women to face dangers of every kind by sea and land, not for love of country to extend its dominion, not for gain or positions of honour in these far away nations, but to proclaim to them the Gospel of the Lord Jesus ; and third, the fulfilment of the prophecy required linguistic gifts of a high order to master the languages of other nations so as to translate the

Gospel into them. And yet what seemed an impossible task was immediately attempted; the prejudices of the first disciples were removed and the world vision given them; the martyr spirit of devotion constrained them to count not their lives dear in carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth; disciples with linguistic gifts consecrated them to the service of the Lord in translating the Gospel into the languages of all nations, so that it has been translated in whole or in part into five hundred and thirty-five languages.

Look at India alone, and see the thousands of missionaries and preachers all over India preaching the Gospel; the hundreds of Christian Churches with a membership increasing by thousands every year; the thousands of Mission Schools in which the Gospel is taught to tens of thousands of pupils; the thousands of Zenanas and homes in which Christian women teach and read the Gospel to the women and children; the hundreds of Mission Hospitals and Dispensaries where tens of thousands of the poor and sick of every caste are ministered to out of love to the Lord Jesus; the millions of Gospel portions and tracts in the different languages of India which, year by year, are distributed far and wide—more than five million copies of the Gospel sold or given away in the last five years—all these unite in witnessing that this prophecy of the Lord Jesus is being fulfilled in India.

What has been said of the widespread preaching of the Gospel in India may be said also of its proclamation in China. In fact, there are more missionaries from Great Britain, Europe, and America in China than in India, besides the thousands of Chinese witnesses. Twenty years ago in the Boxer uprising, 20,000 followers of the Lord Jesus, missionaries from Europe and America and Chinese Christians, witnessed unto death to their faith in Him. And so I might go from country to country, and show that in Japan, Korea,

Formosa, Siam, Africa, Arabia, Persia, and throughout the Turkish Empire, in all the States of Europe and America as well as in the great Islands of the Ocean, the Gospel is being published through the printed page and proclaimed by the voice of witnesses in the languages of these countries. The circulation of the Gospels by the Bible Society now averages ten million copies a year.

In the report of the British and Foreign Bible Society (for the year ending March 31, 1919) we read that even during the course of the Great War—between August 1914 and November 1918—the Society published the Gospel in 35 fresh languages, nearly all of them in languages previously unwritten : twenty-one of these languages are African ; ten are Asiatic ; two are spoken in the Islands of the South Seas and two belong to South America. This one Bible Society expended for the year ending March 1919 fifty-one lakhs of rupees on the translation, publication and circulation of the Christian Scriptures in many languages, nineteen lakhs coming from their sale. Other Bible Societies, as the American, also expend lakhs of rupees every year for this same object. It must not be forgotten that these large sums are the free will offerings of the followers of the Lord Jesus for the spread of His Gospel by means of the printed page throughout the world, not a rupee given by any Government for this purpose.

If it be said that the Gospel has not been proclaimed in Afghanistan and Tibet, one answer is that translations of the Gospels have been made into the languages of these countries and distributed among the people ; another answer is that a goodly number of Afghans and Tibetans have become disciples of the Lord Jesus and are witnessing for Him to their countrymen, as in Peshawar, Leh, and other places ; and yet another answer is that quite a number of missionaries are living on the borders of these countries, telling the message of the Gospel to pilgrims, traders and travellers who go to

and fro, and through them it is taken to towns and villages far and wide. In view of these facts, may we not say that the prophecy of the worldwide preaching of the Gospel is in course of fulfilment—the prophecy not saying how thorough or extensive the witness must be in each nation; and may we not also say that it is in course of rapid fulfilment throughout the world?

Putting these facts together, what inferences may fairly be drawn from them?

First this, that the other prophecies spoken by the Lord Jesus will in their own time be fulfilled. For example, as He left the Temple at Jerusalem for the last time, He foretold that it would be demolished so completely that not one stone would be left upon another, and that this House of God would remain desolate until He came again, and that then the Jews would call Him Blessed; Matt. 23: 37–39; 24: 3, 14, 32–35; Mark 13: 1–10; Luke 13: 34, 35. In the year 70 A.D., the Temple was destroyed in the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman Army, although the Emperor Titus had given orders that it should not be destroyed; and in the year 137 A.D., the Roman Emperor Hadrian had a plow driven over its site. Centuries later, many of the great stones of the Temple were gathered out of the ruins by Moslems and used in building the walls of the Mosque of Omar which stands on the site of the Temple. These stones are to-day silent witnesses to the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning them. And if their witness be not sufficient, then listen, on any Friday of the year, as I did years ago, to the wailing of Jewish pilgrims in what is known as 'The Wailing Place of the Jews,' just outside the Mosque of Omar, wailing as they remember that these stones were once in the walls of their Temple. And so these Jewish pilgrims from many countries are unconsciously witnessing to the fulfilment of the words of the Lord Jesus spoken nearly 1900 years ago.

Again, the Jewish people themselves are witnesses, present in every nation, to the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Lord Jesus that they as a people and nation shall not pass away until the prophecies He had spoken concerning the desolation of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the preaching of the Gospel to all nations are fulfilled. This prophecy is being fulfilled. The Jews are a people without a country of their own; they have been scattered for centuries among the nations of the earth, and yet they have not been swallowed up by these nations. Their continuance and persistence as a separate people, maintaining their racial identity and characteristics, not in one or two countries, but in almost every nation for centuries, makes them 'the miracle of history'.

From the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, their history is a succession of massacres. One of the blackest spots in the history of the last thousand years and more is the way the nations have tried to wipe out the Jewish race; but all in vain. There is no parallel to this in the history of the world. Why is it that the great nations of the earth have not succeeded in swallowing up or sweeping away this little nation, so that after centuries of massacre they live and preserve their individuality and nationality—although without a Temple, without a priesthood, and without a country? The answer is this, that the Lord Jesus has spoken the word that as a nation they shall not pass away until they see Him again and call Him blessed. Hence, in vain the Roman Emperor gave the command that the Temple should not be destroyed. Hence, in vain have the great nations, by massacre and persecution, tried to wipe them off the face of the earth. The word of the Lord has preserved them like the burning bush which the Prophet Moses saw—'Behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.' Ex. 3 : 12.

The Jewish rulers and priests and people would not have Jesus as their King. When the Roman Governor, Pilate, said unto the Jews—'Behold your King;' they cried out, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him.' Pilate saith unto them: 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no King but Cæsar.' John 19: 15. And so up to this day the Jewish nation has no king save the Kings and Emperors, the Kaisers of the nations where they have been scattered. To-day the Jews are as they have been for centuries, 'A people without a country.' The total Jewish population of the world is eleven million five hundred thousand, of whom only seventy-eight thousand live in their own country, and there they live as foreigners. (Encyclopædia Britannica. Eleventh Edition.)

As we look at the great stones of the Jewish temple now in the wall of the Mosque of Omar; as we hear the wailing of the Jewish pilgrims as they kiss those stones: as we recall the names of the Jewish bankers who have controlled the finances of great nations—a member of one of these great Jewish Banking families now Secretary of State for India—some of these bankers ready for a century past to give millions of gold and silver to Kings and Emperors to restore Jerusalem and the Temple site to them; as we behold this bush, the Jewish nation, burned with fire but not consumed—may we not, uniting these prophecies concerning Jerusalem, the Jews, and their Temple, with that of the worldwide preaching of the Gospel also being fulfilled to-day, believe with all confidence that in due time all the words of the Lord Jesus will be abundantly and wonderfully fulfilled?

A hundred and fifty years ago it was said—Look at India, China, Japan, Korea, Siam, Africa, and other nations; the Gospel has not been translated into the languages of those countries, and millions of their people have never even heard the name of Jesus, and yet He told His disciples that

His Gospel would be proclaimed in all the nations unto the uttermost part of the earth. There is not the faintest sign of the fulfilment of this prophecy: How can we believe the Gospel when we find in it prophecies spoken by Jesus which seem to us empty words? Those words which seemed even a hundred years ago impossible of fulfilment are no longer counted empty words. They are being fulfilled before our very eyes. We do well to take heed to them as unto a lamp shining in a dark place until the day of His coming dawn. 2 Peter 1 : 20.

There is yet another inference justified by the fulfilment of this prophecy: It is that its fulfilment required divine power—a power greater than that wielded by Kings and Emperors.

What is the power that has constrained thousands of men and women to leave home and country to preach the Gospel in far away countries, among people of strange tongues and customs, often among illiterate people and barbarians, as for example, were the people of the British Isles before missionaries brought the Gospel to them? What power is it that has led men and women of education and refinement to spend their lives in these countries, trying to win the people to become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; opening schools for their children, hospitals for their sick, homes for their orphans, and asylums for their blind and lepers? What power is it that takes the missionary of the Lord Jesus to these countries and keeps him there to the end of life? He, too, like his classmates in the school or college of the homeland, or like a brother or some member of his own family, might have gone to that far away country as a member of the civil, medical or educational service, or as a barrister or a merchant; and he, too, might have risen to be a magistrate or a judge, or to be head of some department of Government, such as the educational or

medical, or even to be the head of a province. Why did he give up the prospect of positions of honour and wealth in his own country, as well as in the far away country—positions which his classmates, teachers and all who knew him prophesied he could attain if he wished? He is the only one who can answer this question, and it is the answer of the greatest of missionaries, the missionary who first preached the Gospel in Europe, and who was scourged and imprisoned for preaching it—'All that was gain to me, for Christ's sake I have counted it loss.' Phil. 3 : 7. 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again.' 2 Cor. 5 : 14, 15.

It is the love of Christ that has constrained these men and women to leave home and country—that love which led Him from heaven to earth and at last to the death of the Cross for them and for all men. He gave the command to go, and they have gone, counting it a privilege and honour to be His missionaries. This is the explanation of the fact—a fact that cannot be denied—that young men, not a few of them marked out for high positions in their own countries by reason of their natural gifts and education, as well as by the integrity of their character, have given up all such ambitions and gone to Africa, Arabia, China, Japan, Korea, Siam, India, Persia, throughout the Turkish Empire, and to distant Islands of the sea, as missionaries of the Lord Jesus, often like their Master misunderstood and rejected of men.

It is not to praise missionaries that I write this, but to show that the Lord Jesus has power to bring to pass His words; that the prophecy that His Gospel would be preached unto all nations required divine power for its fulfilment, a power greater than any on earth; a power not like that of

some great man in his own generation and among his own people, which he cannot perpetuate, but a power put forth through centuries among people of many nations, and increasing with the passage of the centuries—that is the power Christ has put forth and is putting forth to-day among all the nations of the earth. And so the enthusiastic world-wide preaching of the Gospel adds yet another proof to the many that the Lord Jesus has divine power within the heart and over the lives of men, the power which constrains them at His command to give up the things that are dearest to the heart—home, family, country, and the common ambitions of men and women.

Were it within the scope of this paper I might summon as witnesses the men and women in every nation who have become followers of the Lord Jesus and suffered the loss of all things because of their faith, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Him.

There is yet another inference to be drawn from the worldwide preaching of the Gospel—It is that the coming again of the Lord Jesus may be near. His disciples asked Him, 'When shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the age?' He did not put away their question as foolish, but answered that they were not to be misled by false signs—such as great wars or famines or pestilences or earthquakes; that these would continue unto the end, but they are not the signs of His coming. That sign would be the preaching of the Gospel in every nation. He warned His disciples again and again that His coming would be sudden, 'like the lightning which cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west;' that His coming would find men mocking at this prophecy; that it would be as in the days of the Prophet Noah, who foretold the coming of the flood, but whose words seemed idle tales to the men of his day; and so the flood come and swept them

away. 'For, as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.' Matthew 24: 37–42.

In the parable of the Nobleman 'going into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return,' the Lord Jesus foretold that the attitude of the world to the Gospel and to Himself until His coming again would be that of the citizens who sent word after the Nobleman, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Luke 19: 12–27. Has not this been the attitude of the world to the Lord Jesus all through these centuries and up to the present day? Is not this the attitude of educated India and of all Moslem nations? Have the European nations crowned Him Lord of all? While this attitude fills the hearts of His disciples with sorrow, yet, instead of shaking their faith in the Gospel, it furnishes still an additional evidence of its truth.

Wherever we are able to test the words of the Lord Jesus they have stood the test. In this paper we have put one of His prophecies to the test, a prophecy spoken nearly nineteen hundred years ago, that His Gospel would be preached in every nation, and that this world-wide preaching of the Gospel would be the sign of His coming again and of the end of this age. This prophecy is in course of rapid fulfilment to-day in every nation. What does this mean? Does it not mean that in due time all the prophecies spoken by the Lord Jesus will be fulfilled? Does it not mean that now He has divine power, the power to bring to pass His words? Does it not also mean that His coming may be near at hand?

To you, reader, who count His gracious promises and wonderful prophecies only idle dreams or empty words, His

coming will be a day of unspeakable shame and irretrievable loss. You are rejecting the Saviour whom God sent into the world to make atonement for your sins. 1 John 4 : 9. You are rejecting the true 'Nishkalank Avatar,' the Saviour who was without sin, and so not under condemnation to death because of sin, and yet who of His own free will gave Himself up to the awful death of the cross, as He himself says 'for the remission of sins'. Matt. 26 : 28. You refuse to accept the remission or forgiveness of your sins from His hands. What then is left for you but to go with your unforgiven sins into the presence of God ? It is clearly taught in the Word of God, that those who stubbornly reject the message of the Gospel and refuse to love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, bring upon themselves a loss both now and at His coming which is irreparable. Matt. 16 : 26–27 ; Mark 8 : 35–38 ; Luke 9 : 23–26 ; John 3 : 36.

'We all know the penal consequences which sin brings in its train even in this world. Remorse, unavailing sorrow, shame, fear, the sight of injury which we have done to those we love and which we cannot undo, incapacity for service—all these are part and parcel of the fruit which sin bears. But they are not the wrath to come. They do not exhaust the judgement of God upon evil. Instead of discrediting it, they bear witness to it; they are, so to speak, its forerunners; the lurid clouds that appear here and there in the sky, but are finally lost in the dense mass of the thunderstorm.' (Dr. James Denney on Thessalonians, page 61.)

The message of the Gospel is that—'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned : but he that believeth not it condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name

of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. . . . 'For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but has passed out of death into life.' John 3: 16–19; 5: 22-24. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 1 John 4: 9.

The Lord Jesus Christ has sent His disciples to proclaim this message in every nation, unto the ends of the earth. He says to every one, and so He says to you—'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' John 6: 37. What answer will you give Him?

Get a copy of His Gospel and read it with prayer; meditate on it quietly: listen to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to you as you read. As you thus read and pray and meditate, the words of Christ will produce faith in Him, love to God for the gift of His Son to be our Saviour, hatred of sin, the beginning of a new life of communion with God which will bring increasing victory over sin, deeper and deeper penitence because of failures, peace of conscience, a forgiving spirit, love of your fellowmen of every nation, deliverance from the fear of death and the assurance that if you die before Christ comes, He will give you a place which He has prepared for you; and that if you are alive when He comes, then, with the redeemed and blessed dead of all the ages, you will be transfigured into His likeness and shall praise and serve and reign with Him over a new earth throughout the ages.

'And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.' Matt. 24: 14.

'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' Matt. 24: 35.

'I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful . . . He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly, Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Revelation 21: 3-5; 22: 20.

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